Cedar River Instream Flow Commission
Final Minutes

SPU Water Quality Lab

May 6th, 2009

Organizations/Members Present:

- Seattle Public Utilities (Tom Fox, Karl Burton, Alan Chinn)
- King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks (Steve Hirschey)
- Muckleshoot Tribe (Holly Coccoli)
- Seattle City Light (Liz Ablow)
- Washington Department of Ecology (Jay Cook)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Larry Schick)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Tim Romanski)
- NOAA Fisheries (Jim Muck)
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Mark Hunter)

I. Call to Order: Tom Fox called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM.

II. Approval of Agenda: Approved as presented.

III. Approval of Draft Minutes: The IFC did not have any comments on April's minutes, which were approved and finalized.

IV. News and Notes: Rand Little is not attending due to sickness. Steve noted that the legislative session is now complete. Jay mentioned that funding has been cut substantially for water rights staff at Dept. of ecology. Mark said that WDFW will be laying off 2 out of 10 FTEs working in the instream flows/HPA program. Holly said that some local WDFW staff at the hatchery manager level will have to compete for one regional hatchery manager position. Steve H. said that King County's budget will take an 11% hit this year and County leadership says there will be further layoffs.

V. Real Time Water Management

Hydrologic Conditions for Tolt and Cedar: Chester Morse Reservoir water level is near the refill target of 1554.5 for this date. Inflows are approaching median

levels as rain and snowmelt add to the reservoir volume. Snowpack in the Cedar River Watershed is estimated at 36.2" snow water equivalent, which is approximately 155% of the long-term average snowpack for this time of year. The Cedar River at Renton actual gauged flow vs. estimated unregulated flow graph showed that recent freshets as a result of SPU's operational reservoir flow release strategies have a similar shape and form of naturally occurring spring freshets but a different temporal distribution. Tom said that SPU intends to continue the freshet strategy during the month of May where water releases are made over a period of days to maintain reservoir refill targets followed by a reduction in water releases to bring flows in the Cedar River back down to lower flow levels. Flows in the Cedar River will then be maintained at the lower flow levels for a period of days with hopes that steelhead spawners will spawn in areas where there is low risk of potential steelhead redd dewatering later in the summer. Tom said that SPU is currently planning to target around 300 cfs for the period between freshets. The IFC members generally concurred with this year's springtime freshet strategy for reservoir and river management on the Cedar River. Jim asked how many steelhead redds have been identified and Karl reported zero steelhead redds so far. Tim and Holly raised as a question to the group that maybe this year's current hydrologic conditions and near term forecasts could allow for planning a flow target of 400 cfs for the period between freshets. Alan said that SPU has been considering a range of steelhead spawning flow target options for the month of May based on this year's hydrologic conditions, forecasts, and Karl's periodic steelhead redd surveys in the Cedar River. This year's current hydrologic conditions may actually preclude flows near 300 cfs at this point in time. As a reminder, the IFC will soon be discussing the allocation of the Firm and Non-Firm Blocks of water for the period June 17 through August 4, 2009.

The Tolt snowpack is at 53.03" SWE, which is approximately 165% of average snowpack. South Fork Tolt Reservoir water level is rising slowly and SPU is planning to make water releases from the South Fork Tolt Reservoir to the South Fork Tolt River using Seattle City Light's River Return Valve. Inflows into the S. Fork Tolt Reservoir are above median historical levels.

Liz reviewed a recent downramping violation on April 30th. Downramping from the Masonry Dam 48-inch Low Level Outlet Valve exceeded the 1"/hr downramping rate for two fifteen minute increments by 0.7"/hr and 0.2"/hr. On April 30th, SCL was requested to reduce releases from the Masonry Dam 48-inch Low Level Outlet Valve from a flow of 232 cfs to a new flow of 37 cfs. This operation was requested with a rate of 25 cfs per hour. This downramp rate was to occur until the river flow measured at USGS Stream Gaging Station No. 12116400 upstream of the Cedar Falls Powerhouse Tailrace reached 90 cfs (just above critical flows) at which time the operator, in accordance with the standard downramping procedures, needs to reduce the downramping rate. Downramping followed the 25 cfs/hour rate but the

operator on duty failed to reduce the downramping rate when instream flows at the gage reached 90 cfs, which resulted in the downramping exceedance. Liz noted that this error was the first downramping violation that has occurred at either the dam or powerhouse in over 2 years. The operator error served as a good reminder to the operators to check downramping procedures and instream flows prior to initiating a downramp instead of just following requested downramping rates. Fortunately, steelhead and trout fry had not begun emergence when the violation occurred.

Tom mentioned that demand was steady but a bit lower than last year. SPU is targeting June 17th or earlier as the date for completed refill (1563' in Chester Morse).

Lake Washington: The current elevation for Lake Washington is 21.8' and the Corps expects it to be at 21.85 to 21.9 feet by the end of the week. Larry mentioned that Lynne Melder expects the Corps will soon set a date and send out invitations for a meeting regarding the diffuser well/fish mortality issue. Currently, the Corps is operating all 4 flumes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

***Fish Update*:** Karl mentioned that the spring redd survey crew had identified 44 trout redds to date, one of which is relatively shallow. However, Karl will wait to take a depth measurement on the next survey at relatively low flow to determine whether the redd is vulnerable to dewatering by the HCP minimum flow schedule. The redd was identified when flows were exceeding 800 cfs and Karl thinks that is too high to use and expect an accurate estimation of the flow at which the redd begins dewatering.

Forecasts and Water Supply Outlook: Larry told the IFC that, so far, May is relatively wet with above average rainfall and a very healthy snowpack. Snow has begun to melt but it has occurred slowly with the colder than normal weather. Larry said that rain is expected for Thursday this week but Friday through Sunday should be warm and dry. The midterm forecast is for normal temperatures and rainfall in May. Larry think snowmelt will continue through the end of June this year.

Larry reported that the Howard Hansen Dam sinkhole will soon be examined and investigated by leading experts in the field of dam safety. The Corps will hold the pool elevation at 1147' for 4 to 5 days while the experts determine how high the pool can be filled while remaining safe. The sinkhole is at 1190' and the pool reached 1188' during the high flow event in January during which the sinkhole appeared.

Tom mentioned that there may be a need for Seattle to send water to Tacoma if the Howard Hansen Dam cannot be filled to normal refill levels this year. Tom said that, if this looks likely, then SPU may ask the Dept. of Ecology if they can fill Chester

Morse Reservoir to 1564 or 1565' for a short period in early summer to increase regional water supply.

VI. Supplemental Studies

Adaptive Management Program Conceptual Model for Peak Flow Study: Tom passed out a revised copy of the peak flow management study authored by Chris McGirl and said we would discuss it at the next meeting. Holly mentioned that it would be good to have a date on all proposals so the IFC knows which one is current.

VII. Compliance Report: The 2008 Annual Instream Flow Compliance Report is complete and Tom asked the IFC for comments or ideas for improvement. The IFC did not have any edits or suggestions but not all members had looked at the compliance report yet. Liz provided a quick summary explaining the new section "Emergency Bypass Capability" added to the compliance report.

VIII. Walsh Lake Diversion Ditch Discussion: Tom informed the IFC that there was a small landslide in January that blocked Walsh Lake Diversion Ditch just below the weir at Rock Creek. Eventually, the landslide dam was breached and since then, water has been running down Rock Creek as it did prior to the diversion. This means that the water that used to be diverted is no longer entering the Cedar River below the USGS gage below Landsburg Diversion. Instead, it is flowing into Rock Creek and entering the Cedar River above Landsburg. Tom said that there are water rights issues, fish issues and habitat issues that need to be sorted out but the IFC discussion should center on the instream flow ramifications for the Cedar River. Tom passed out an information packet put together by Rand Little. The packet provided a schematic system map and observed and simulated flows for the Walsh Lake Diversion Ditch system with and without the inputs from above the landslide. Rand also developed a table based on the model outputs that estimated how much water would be needed by week, in addition to current minimum flow levels, to compensate for the change in flow resulting from the routing of Walsh Lake Ditch back into Rock Creek. Tom asked the IFC to think about potential adjustments to the HCP minimum instream flow regime that would be appropriate given the change in discharge in Walsh Lake Diversion Ditch. The IFC generally agreed with the potential approach as shown on page 10 of the information packet.

IX. Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

1) Discussions of IHA Study.
2) Finalizing for Adaptive Management Peak Flow Study

X. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 PM